

BRFSS Brief

Number 1002

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) is an annual statewide telephone survey of adults developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and administered by the New York State Department of Health. The BRFSS is designed to provide information on behaviors, risk factors, and utilization of preventive services related to the leading causes of chronic and infectious diseases, disability, injury, and death among the noninstitutionalized, civilian population aged 18 years and older.

Falls and Fall Injuries

New York State Older Adults 2008

Introduction

Fall-related injuries in older adults are the leading cause of injury deaths, hospitalizations and emergency department visits in New York State. Each year in New York State, an average of 900 residents aged 65 years and older die from injuries sustained in falling, and more than 128,000 fall-related incidents result in injuries severe enough to require hospital treatment.¹ Fall-related injuries in older adults include hip fractures and traumatic brain injuries that can result in long-term disability or death.

Strategies for reducing the risk of falling include exercise programs to improve strength and balance,

health care provider medication review, annual eye exams by eye doctors, and home assessment with modification. By reducing the risk of falling and of fall injuries, New Yorkers can extend the amount of time they are able to live independently.

Reducing unintentional injuries is one of the ten statewide public health priorities identified in the New York State Department of Health's *Prevention Agenda Toward the Healthiest State*. One objective to achieve this goal is to reduce the fall-related hospitalization rate among persons aged 65 years and older in New York by 25 percent to no more than 155 per 10,000 by the year 2013.

BRFSS Questions

[Note: Asked only of respondents aged 45 years and older.]

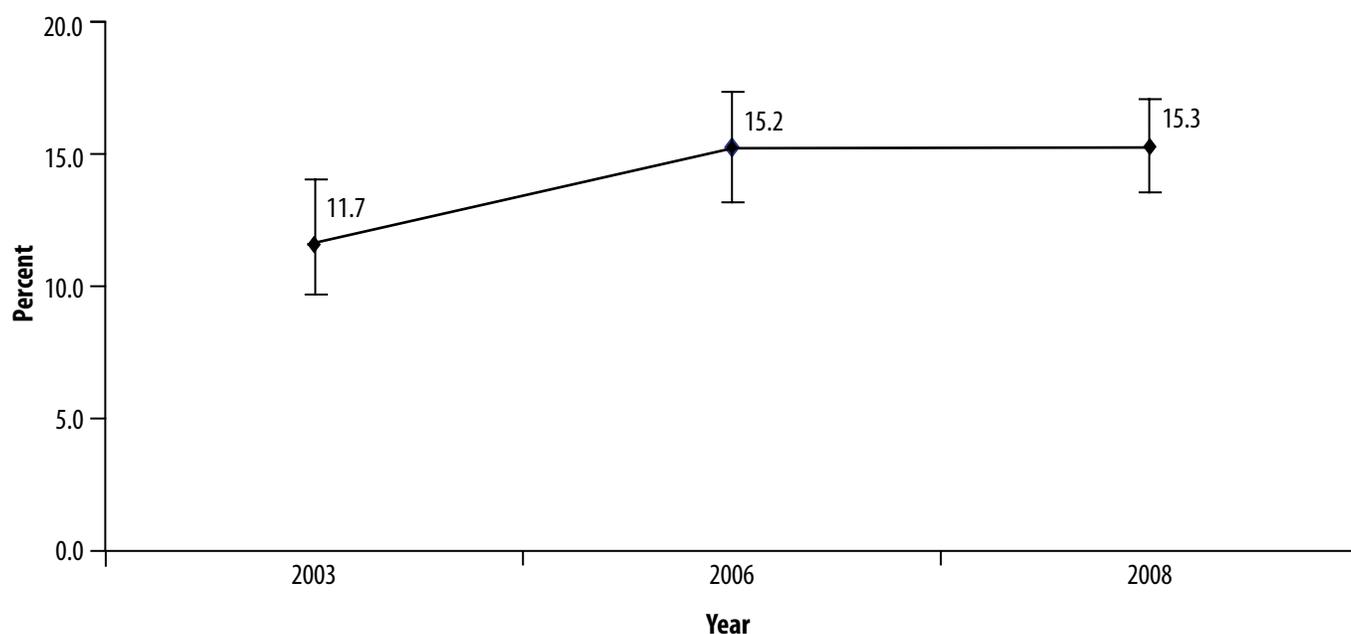
The next question asks about recent falls. By a fall, we mean when a person unintentionally comes to rest on the ground or another lower level.

1. In the past 3 months, how many times have you fallen?

[If one or more times, ask:]

2. How many of these falls caused an injury? By an injury, we mean the fall caused you to limit your regular activities for at least a day or to go see a doctor.

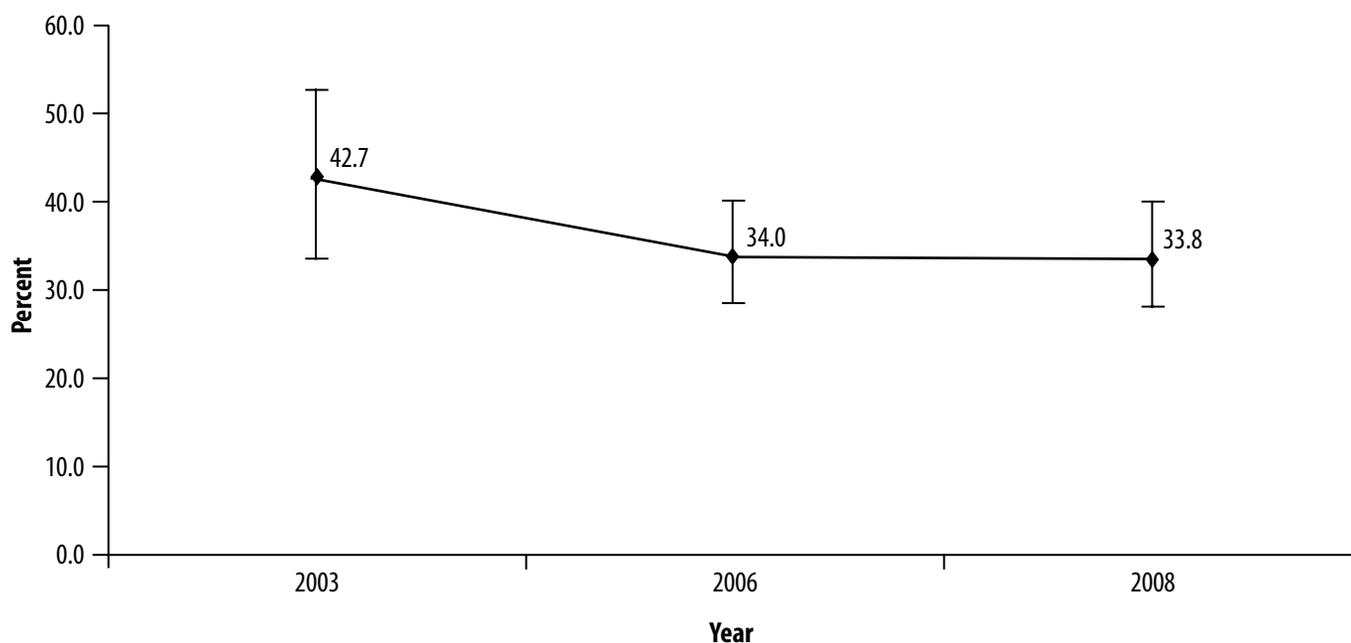
Percentage of New York Adults Aged 65 Years or Older Who Reported a Fall* During the Preceding Three Months, by BRFSS Year



Note: Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

* In past 3 months, unintentionally came to rest on the ground or another lower level.

Among New York Adults Aged 65 Years or Older Who Fell at Least Once During the Preceding Three Months, the Percentage Who Reported a Fall-Related Injury*, by BRFSS Year



Note: Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

* Fall caused limitations in regular activities for at least a day or caused to go see a doctor.

Prevalence of Self-Reported Fall and Fall-Related Injury During the Preceding Three Months Among New York Adults Aged 65 Years or Older by Selected Characteristics, 2008 BRFSS

	At least one self-reported fall during preceding 3 months [N=2,347]		Among those who fell, those who were injured at least once [N=366]	
	% ^a	95% CI ^a	%	95% CI
Total New York State (NYS)	15.3	13.6-17.2	33.8	28.1-40.1
Sex				
Male	15.0	12.1-18.3	25.5	20.1-31.8
Female	15.5	13.6-17.8	39.4	32.4-46.9
Age (years)				
65-74	14.3	12.1-16.9	34.1	26.0-43.2
≥ 75	16.3	13.9-19.1	33.6	25.9-42.3
Race/ethnicity				
White non-Hispanic	15.9	14.2-17.8	29.8	24.9-35.4
Black non-Hispanic	12.8	7.9-20.0	*	*
Hispanic	18.5	10.3-31.0	*	*
Other non-Hispanic	11.0	5.0-22.6	*	*
Annual household income				
< \$15,000	13.0	9.1-18.1	*	*
\$15,000-\$24,999	16.6	12.7-21.3	*	*
\$25,000-\$34,999	17.1	12.5-22.9	*	*
\$35,000-\$49,999	16.2	11.3-22.7	*	*
\$50,000-\$74,999	13.8	9.6-19.7	*	*
≥ \$75,000	16.9	12.5-22.4	*	*
Missing ^b	13.1	10.1-16.8	*	*
Educational attainment				
High school graduate or less	14.5	10.1-17.3	38.8	29.4-49.0
Some post-high school	16.4	13.0-20.5	32.7	22.5-44.9
College graduate	15.6	12.8-18.9	28.8	20.7-38.5
Disability^c				
Yes	22.6	19.4-26.2	42.8	34.4-51.6
No	11.0	9.2-13.0	22.9	16.4-31.1
Residence				
New York City (NYC)	12.3	9.3-16.1	*	*
NYS exclusive of NYC	16.6	14.6-18.7	30.9	25.1-37.3

* Data do not meet reporting criteria (confidence intervals with a half-width greater than 10, denominator less than 50 and/or a numerator less than 10).

a % =Percentage; 95% CI =Confidence interval (at the 95 percent probability level). Percentages are weighted to population characteristics.

b "Missing" category included because more than 10% of the sample did not report income.

c All respondents who report activity limitations due to physical, mental, or emotional problems OR have health problems that require the use of special equipment.

References

1. New York State Department of Health,
Bureau of Injury Prevention: Vital Statistics
Death Files and Statewide Planning and
Research Cooperative System.

Program Contributions

New York State Department of Health
Bureau of Injury Prevention
(518) 473-1143
injury@health.state.ny.us
www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/injury_prevention/

Order Information

Copies may be obtained by contacting:

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